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Comprehensive review of special political missions

Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/89, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report regarding overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and women's equal participation. The report, which is the sixth to the Assembly on this issue, covers the period from August 2017 to July 2018.

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I. Introduction

1. Special political missions remain critical assets for the United Nations response to growing global peace and security challenges and they continue to evolve to meet new requirements. The missions vary considerably with regard to their mandates, scope, institutional design and approaches. They range from special envoys and representatives carrying out good offices mandates to monitoring teams, groups and panels overseeing Security Council sanctions regimes, small field-based missions delivering on specialized tasks such as disarmament, and multidimensional operations with comprehensive mandates to support political transitions and efforts to build sustainable peace. Three United Nations regional offices in Central Africa, Central Asia and West Africa serve as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy and dialogue and work very closely with their regional counterparts on transnational peace and security issues affecting the regions in which they are based.

2. Special political missions today operate in increasingly complex and, in many cases, highly unstable security situations. In environments marked by regionalized conflicts and intercommunal tensions, large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, and mounting cross-border threats such as transnational organized crime, arms proliferation and terrorism, they work in an increasingly integrated manner with United Nations entities, including country teams and peacekeeping operations. In doing so, special political missions have had to become more flexible in carrying out their mandates while managing new risks.

3. Prevention is a cornerstone of all aspects of the work of the United Nations and the role played by special political missions as part of this approach is critical. Efforts to improve the effectiveness, transparency, accountability and representativeness of special political missions must include, at their core, a focus on mission capacities to strengthen prevention of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. As part of these efforts, I have made it a priority that special political missions and other field-based operations increase their cooperation with and support to regional and subregional organizations in the area of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

4. The ongoing efforts to strengthen the United Nations system, notably through the initiatives currently under way to reposition the United Nations development system, adjust its peace and security architecture, update its management and administrative arrangements and increase its capacity and analysis related to gender, will further support the United Nations in delivering on its mandates, including those of special political missions. In particular, the establishment of a joint regional pillar in the restructured future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations will ensure better support to the work of special political missions, as well as comprehensive and integrated regional approaches. I look forward to the full operationalization of my reforms next January.

5. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/89, in which the Assembly requested me to submit a report regarding overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and women's equal participation. The report, which is the sixth to the Assembly on this issue, covers developments from August 2017 to July 2018. Section II of the report focuses on key operational developments during the reporting period. Section III provides a summary of the interactive dialogue with Member States on special political missions held in New York on 9 July 2018. Section IV addresses various policy issues pertaining to special political

missions and section V contains some observations on the importance of this tool and ways to strengthen it further.

II. Key operational developments

6. The present section provides, in summarized form, an update on key developments concerning the operations of special political missions in the reporting period, from August 2017 to July 2018.

7. In the Great Lakes region, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with the African Union and other regional bodies, continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Office of my Special Envoy and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with representatives of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda and the other guarantors of the Framework, launched a follow-up mechanism in April 2018 for the repatriation of disarmed former combatants of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and their dependants living in transit camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as former combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars and their dependants who currently reside in camps in Rwanda and Uganda.

8. In support of sustainable development efforts, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region continued to promote the operationalization of the Great Lakes regional strategic framework, which harmonizes United Nations action in the region by aligning programmatic and political interventions in support of the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In this regard, specific cross-border projects are identified in the regional strategic framework, which contribute to addressing the root causes of regional instability and promoting cooperation among the countries of the region, including in the areas of natural resources, economic integration, mobility, youth, gender and the rule of law.

9. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy led several initiatives to promote concerted regional and international support for dialogue and political processes, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, and continued to promote the participation of women in political processes across the Great Lakes region. At my Special Envoy's initiative, following consultations with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), high-level solidarity missions by women leaders representing the United Nations, the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region were deployed to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in July and August 2018. The objective of the missions was to promote women's concerns and participation in decision-making and in peace and political processes in the region.

10. The Office of my Special Envoy for Burundi supported the inter-Burundi dialogue, which is led by the East African Community. The joint technical working group, composed of the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations, held four meetings in September, November and December 2017 to pave the way for further dialogue. The Special Envoy travelled to Burundi in November and December 2017 and held consultations in Addis Ababa with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and its Commissioner for Peace and Security in January and March 2018 respectively, on how the United Nations and the African Union can further support the efforts of the East African Community. The resumption of the East

African Community-led dialogue will be critical to resolving differences among the parties ahead of expected elections in 2020. The Special Envoy will continue to explore options with the East African Community and the African Union to move the process forward.

11. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) continued to play a key role in coordinating support from the international community for the political process and overall engagement in the country, including for the Federal Government's political road map for inclusive politics, 2017–2020. As part of its electoral support mandate, set out in Security Council resolutions 2358 (2017) and 2408 (2018), UNSOM is providing capacity-building, technical and strategic advice to the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in preparation for the 2020/21 elections. UNSOM has also been supporting the Government of Somalia in the security and rule of law sectors, in particular in establishing the national security architecture, with close interlinkages with the transition plan for the handover of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia to Somali national security forces. As part of its human rights mandate, UNSOM continued to engage in monitoring and capacity-building efforts, including to promote respect for human rights, women's empowerment and child protection; prevent conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence; and strengthen justice institutions and help to ensure accountability, in particular with respect to crimes against women and children.

12. UNSOM is also providing increasing support to the Federal Government's reinforced initiative on peace and reconciliation processes, in particular for the consolidation of the formation of the Federal State, as well as mediation, prevention and resolution of conflicts. UNSOM has assisted the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in developing its national reconciliation framework and establishing a group of friends of reconciliation. The group comprises Member States, regional and international organizations and civil society and supports local inter-clan reconciliation processes. This effort seeks to build on experiences from 2017, including the facilitation of a ceasefire agreement between Puntland and Galmudug over the disputed border town of Gaalkacyo, followed by the establishment of a joint policing mechanism to monitor the implementation of that agreement.

13. During the reporting period, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, working in close collaboration with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, continued to promote the resolution of outstanding issues from the comprehensive peace agreement. It pursued arrangements to strengthen bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and to address related internal conflicts in both countries that are an impediment to the normalization of bilateral relations. The Office encouraged the parties to engage in the establishment of temporary arrangements on the final status of Abyei. Furthermore, in partnership with the High-level Implementation Panel, the Office continued to support the negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North to find a settlement to the conflict in the Two Areas (Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States).

14. Working in close partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union, the Office of my Special Envoy further supported efforts to engage with the parties towards a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan. It provided extensive support, including shuttle diplomacy, in the lead-up to the IGAD-led high-level revitalization forum, which resulted in the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in December 2017. The Office of my Special Envoy also sought to establish close working relations and a shared strategy between the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD.

15. In Liberia, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) worked in close coordination with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and regional and international partners to promote and ensure a peaceful environment in the run up to the general elections held on 10 October 2017 and the second round of the presidential election conducted on 26 December 2017. In addition, UNOWAS contributed, in coordination with UNMIL, to the deployment of former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, a member of my High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, to complement good offices efforts in support of a peaceful resolution of electoral disputes and an orderly democratic transition in the country. Overall, the efforts of UNOWAS contributed to the peaceful and successful conduct of the electoral process, which culminated in the swearing-in of President George Manneh Weah on 22 January 2018.

16. During the reporting period, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) continued to work towards the implementation of the United Nations action plan for Libya, with a view to assisting in the completion of the transition period. The action plan included a dialogue on drafting a constitution and a national conference process; efforts to unify State institutions; discussions on military and security issues; and preparations for the holding of elections before the end of 2018. UNSMIL also gradually increased its rotational presence in Libya while maintaining an office in Tunis.

17. On 28 February 2018, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2404 (2018) extending the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) for one year, until 28 February 2019. The resolution identified a focused set of priorities for UNIOGBIS and requested me to provide regular reports on the situation, as well as an assessment of the Mission, including options for a possible reconfiguration of the United Nations presence and the re-prioritization of tasks. Pursuant to the Council's resolution, I deployed a technical assessment mission to assist UNIOGBIS in reorienting its posture to align with the revised mandate and established an inclusive change management team to ensure its swift implementation. In line with its revised mandate, UNIOGBIS is focusing on support to the holding of legislative elections in 2018. Assessments are that progress on support for constitutional review, which is another mandated priority of the Mission, will be contingent on the timely and successful conduct of these elections.

18. The Office of my Special Envoy for Syria held the eighth round of political talks in Geneva from 28 November to 14 December 2017 and a special ninth round of intra-Syrian talks in Vienna from 23 to 27 January 2018, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué of June 2012. My Special Envoy also pursued the discussion around the establishment of the constitutional committee in Geneva, consistent with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and building on the final statement of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue held in Sochi, Russian Federation, on 29 and 30 January 2018. As an initial step, my Special Envoy invited the guarantors of the Astana process as well as the "small group" (France, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) to Geneva in June 2018 to continue diplomatic efforts to promote common ground among international players in support of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political process.

19. The Office of my Special Envoy for Syria also continued its engagement with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the Civil Society Support Room. The Office hosted the International Syria Support Group's task forces on a ceasefire and humanitarian access, including in support of implementing Security Council

resolution 2401 (2018), and provided expertise to ceasefire talks in Astana, which were not held under the United Nations umbrella.

20. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon promoted dialogue and international assistance in response to the political crisis in late 2017. Subsequently, under the auspices of the International Support Group for Lebanon, a road map for reform was advanced through three conferences in support of the economic and security sectors and the refugee situation. The United Nations further supported the conduct of parliamentary elections in May 2018, the first such polls since 2009.

21. The Office of my Special Envoy for Yemen promoted renewed impetus to the political process. In the context of recent intensification in the conflict, the Office presented to the Security Council in June 2018 elements of a negotiation framework that could allow for a resumption of negotiations. The Special Envoy has invited the Yemeni parties to peace talks in Geneva on 6 September.

22. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented a decrease of 9 per cent in the number of civilian casualties compared with 2016, but such casualties still stood at a total of 10,453 (3,438 deaths and 7,015 injured). Pursuant to its broad mandate under Security Council resolution 2344 (2017), UNAMA supported the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to promote peace and implement its reform agenda. The Mission reported on the human rights situation, supported regional initiatives to enhance economic, political and security cooperation, and advocated for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and subsequent resolutions. Moreover, UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme, through the United Nations electoral support project, provided technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission to prepare the ground for the 2018 parliamentary and district council elections.

23. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations country team, together with multiple other actors, promoted the centrality of humanitarian concerns within military operations, especially during the Government's military campaign to retake territory from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Following the referendum in the Kurdistan region and the disputed territories in Iraq in September 2017, which was subsequently ruled unconstitutional and cancelled by the Federal Supreme Court, UNAMI engaged extensively with the main stakeholders in Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah. The Mission promoted dialogue and confidence-building, thus helping to prevent further escalation with likely serious regional implications. In implementing this strategy, UNAMI worked closely with members of the Security Council and other interested Member States. UNAMI also engaged on a regular basis with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society and religious and community leaders to foster inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation towards a united, stable and peaceful Iraq, particularly after the victory over ISIL in December 2017.

24. A key aspect of the work of UNAMI during the reporting period was its support to the holding of parliamentary elections on 12 May 2018, including through the provision of advice, support and assistance to the election management bodies before and after the polls, in line with its mandate under Security Council resolution 2367 (2017). In the post-election phase, UNAMI is in close contact with numerous political leaders and actors, including women and minorities, to advocate inclusive non-sectarian dialogue and encourage the swift formation of a new national Government that will reflect the will of the people and ensure the representation of women at the highest levels in political and decision-making structures.

25. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/248, in April 2018 I appointed a Special Envoy on Myanmar. The Special Envoy undertook her introductory mission to the county in June 2018. The visit included travel to Rakhine State, where she pressed for conditions conducive to voluntary, safe and dignified returns of Rohingya refugees who had been uprooted from their homes and fled violence in Rakhine State. She also called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

26. In Colombia, the peace process entered a new phase in September 2017, following the completion of the laying down of weapons and the subsequent transition of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) guerrilla group into a political party, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC). The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2366 (2017), initiated its mandate on 26 September 2017 to verify the reintegration of former guerrilla members and the implementation of security guarantees for the FARC-EP and for conflict-affected communities. The Mission worked closely with the Government of Colombia, FARC and communities to build and sustain confidence in the peace process and foster progress in key issues related to its mandate. As part of these efforts, the Mission endeavoured to promote legal guarantees, unhindered political participation and productive projects for reintegrating former guerrilla members. The Mission also contributed to the verification of the bilateral ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional between October 2017 and January 2018.

27. During the reporting period, the negotiations, facilitated by the United Nations, between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to reach a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue remained at a hiatus, and direct contacts between the two sides, particularly at the level of the leaders of the two communities, were limited. The two leaders met once, on 16 April 2018, at a United Nations-facilitated informal meeting. In June 2018, I informed the Security Council of my intention to launch consultations with the sides and the guarantor powers through a senior United Nations official to hear the outcomes of the reflection which I had called for at the closing of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017, and to help determine whether conditions have matured sufficiently at this stage for a meaningful process going forward. In the meantime, the Office of my Special Adviser on Cyprus continued its engagement with the leaders and other actors such as political parties and civil society organizations bilaterally. The Office also continued to facilitate the work of expert working groups and technical committees.

28. The Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions continued to work closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union on the situation in Georgia within the Geneva International Discussions, a unique framework that brings together the three organizations. In January 2018, following my call to revitalize ongoing mediation processes in Europe, the Co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions launched consultations with all participants and relevant stakeholders to explore ways to further enhance the effectiveness of the process.

29. Turning to the work of the sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels and other entities and mechanisms, during the reporting period the Security Council adopted three resolutions (2371 (2017), 2375 (2017) and 2397 (2017)) concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which expanded the scope of existing sanctions measures; introduced new restrictions on certain economic activities, including new sectoral bans on goods, equipment and machinery, minerals and vessels; and mandated the Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to monitor compliance with those measures. In addition, the Secretary of the

Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) was directed to monitor compliance by Member States with the restrictions concerning refined petroleum products.

30. With reference to the Panel of Experts on Libya, I reported to the Security Council on 11 May 2018 on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2292 (2016), as extended by resolution 2357 (2017), which authorized Member States to inspect, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, vessels bound for or from Libya, to ensure the strict implementation of the arms embargo (S/2018/451). I also submitted two reports to the Security Council (S/2017/1030 and S/2018/602) on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015).

31. On 5 September 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2374 (2017), which imposed targeted sanctions, namely an assets freeze and a travel ban, on individuals and entities hindering the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Council established a committee to monitor the implementation of these measures and requested me to create, for an initial period of 13 months, a group of up to five experts. I appointed a Panel of Experts on Mali comprising four experts on 12 December 2017 (S/2017/1047), constituting a new special political mission.

32. Separately, with regard to the sanctions regime in the Central African Republic, the Security Council adopted resolution 2399 (2018) on 30 January 2018, which broadened the sanctions designation criteria to cover attacks against humanitarian personnel and acts of incitement to violence, particularly on an ethnic or religious basis, that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Central African Republic. The Council also requested the Secretariat to provide benchmarks to assess the arms embargo measures based on option 3 in my letter dated 10 July 2017 (S/2017/597). In that connection, the Secretariat undertook an assessment visit to the Central African Republic in June 2018; its findings are reflected in my letter dated 31 July 2018 (S/2018/752).

33. On 23 August 2017, I submitted my third report (S/2017/715) to the Security Council on the progress made by Guinea-Bissau regarding the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order. I reiterated the recommendations in my previous report (S/2016/720) to continue the sanctions regime and establish a panel of experts to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau. Subsequently, the Council adopted resolution 2404 (2018), in which it requested me to provide another report on this matter. Accordingly, the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with UNIOGBIS, undertook an assessment between June and July, the results of which will be reflected in my fourth report to the Council to be submitted in August 2018.

34. On 21 September, the Security Council adopted resolution 2379 (2017), requesting the Secretary-General to establish an Investigative Team, headed by a Special Adviser, to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da'esh) accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da'esh) in Iraq. On 31 May, I appointed a Special Adviser to head the Investigative Team.

III. Interactive dialogue with Member States

35. In its resolution 72/89, the General Assembly requested me to hold a regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue on the overall policy matters pertaining to special

political missions, and further requested the Secretariat to reach out to Member States prior to the holding of such a dialogue to ensure wide and meaningful participation.

36. Following consultations, the Department of Political Affairs organized the fifth annual interactive dialogue on special political missions on 9 July 2018. Following consultations with the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, it was decided that the theme of the dialogue would be conflict prevention.

37. In her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs highlighted the critical role played by special political missions in conflict prevention, noting that their breadth, flexibility and nimbleness made them important tools in that area. She emphasized four policy issues that were critical to ensuring the success of special political missions, notably in their conflict prevention efforts: partnerships with other actors, particularly regional organizations; their role as a platform for the United Nations to address the regional dimensions of conflict; their contribution to strengthening local ownership of conflict prevention activities; and finally, the importance of a broader enabling environment, with close collaboration between the special political missions and other United Nations mechanisms and tools. She expressed her confidence that the ongoing reform and strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the restructuring of the peace and security architecture, would support special political missions in better delivering on their mandates, while also integrating peacebuilding more closely into their work.

38. In his remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support highlighted the ongoing support provided by his Department to special political missions, including the unique complexities in backstopping that had to be addressed while developing and delivering solutions for the field. He briefed on the Department's efforts to improve supply chain management, strengthen environmental management, foster technology and innovation, enhance measures to combat misconduct, and support field-oriented reform of business processes. He also reiterated his conviction that implementation of reforms, in both the management of the Secretariat and the peace and security architecture, would enable the Organization and its special political missions to better fulfil their mandates.

39. During the subsequent interactive exchange, 17 Member States took the floor to raise issues of relevance for special political missions. A number of speakers emphasized the importance of special political missions in preventing conflict, particularly through taking integrated and holistic approaches to their mandates. Several speakers noted the relationship between the work of the special political missions and elements of the broader United Nations agenda, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Many speakers stressed the importance of ensuring local ownership and close collaboration with Member States to ensure that special political missions delivered effectively in their efforts to prevent conflict and create sustainable peace. Several Member States reiterated the critical role played by regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and called on the United Nations to strengthen its support of and engagement with these partners.

40. Member States further stressed the need for special political missions to engage broadly and to prioritize inclusive approaches, particularly with regard to ensuring a gender perspective. The importance of women's political participation and their meaningful involvement in dialogue and peacemaking was highlighted, as was the need to actively engage young people. Delegates put forward concrete policy suggestions to achieve these goals, such as gender assessments and identifying youth focal points in each mission. Several Member States also spoke of their experiences in hosting special political missions and provided reflections on how to improve their work on the ground, better communicate their work to Member States and the role of the Secretariat in supporting them.

41. Many Member States emphasized that the ongoing process of United Nations reform and restructuring would improve the effectiveness of special political missions and better understanding around their work and reiterated their support for the reform efforts. In particular, the joint regional pillar to be created between the future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations would ensure better support to special political missions from Headquarters, including in their conflict prevention efforts. Finally, several Member States continued to express concern over the funding challenges faced by special political missions and suggested that this issue be kept under discussion.

IV. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions

Conflict prevention and sustaining peace

42. Since taking office and aware that the human and financial costs of crisis have become unsustainable, I have stressed my commitment to place prevention at the core of the work of the United Nations. I have, in particular, highlighted the importance of taking a holistic, coherent and coordinated approach across the entire system in support of prevention. I have also highlighted that the best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis is to ensure they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development, including concerted climate action and management of mass migration. The joint United Nations-World Bank study entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, published in early 2018, demonstrated with empirical research that such prevention works, saves lives and is cost-effective, saving between $5 billion and $70 billion annually on responding to conflicts.

43. In January 2018, I submitted my report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) in follow-up to the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture adopted by the General Assembly (70/262) and the Security Council (2282 (2016)). The report emphasizes that the meaningful participation of women in peace and prevention efforts strengthens the effectiveness of peacebuilding and the direct relation between gender equality, peace and resilience. At the Assembly high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, held from 24 to 26 April 2018, Member States further reiterated their support for a comprehensive approach to prevention and adopted two parallel resolutions in the Assembly and the Council (72/276 and 2413 (2018) respectively). In these resolutions and their continuing discussions, Member States have reiterated their commitment to supporting the work of the United Nations to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. These commitments have reinforced the importance of the United Nations working along the conflict cycle and employing an array of tools, including special political missions. In this context, Member States have recognized the important role of the special political mission as a flexible tool for the maintenance of international peace and security, including through contributing to a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace (resolution 72/89).

Regional partnerships and the work of the regional political offices

44. Robust and sustainable partnerships, particularly with regional and subregional organizations, are fundamental to ensuring the success of special political missions. As illustrated in section II above on key operational developments, much of the work undertaken by special political missions is in close collaboration with and in support of regional partners.

45. The three regional political offices play a particularly important role in forging closer working relations with partners across a range of peace and security issues of common interest. UNOWAS continued to support efforts aimed at preventing conflict and sustaining peace in the region in collaboration with regional and international partners, including by promoting and supporting inclusive national political dialogues and peaceful electoral processes. On 25 and 26 July 2017, UNOWAS conducted a workshop in Conakry to identify lessons learned from previous elections in West Africa and to identify priorities for electoral processes going forward. More than 50 representatives of electoral management bodies and other stakeholders from the region exchanged views on how to enhance the quality of electoral processes. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive political dialogue, the promotion of credible electoral management bodies and the establishment of reliable civil registries to permit the regular updating of electoral registers.

46. On 26 and 27 March 2018, UNOWAS organized a colloquium in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on the theme "Challenges and prospects of political reforms in West Africa", attended by approximately 70 representatives of national institutions spearheading political reforms. The colloquium resulted in the creation of a platform for political reforms in West Africa and the Sahel, the secretariat of which will be hosted by UNOWAS. UNOWAS also supported the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the development of a regional action plan on transhumance and established an informal working group on pastoralism and conflict prevention with the participation of the United Nations and regional entities working on this issue.

47. During the reporting period, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) strengthened cooperation in conflict prevention and early warning, including by conducting more joint analysis and visits to countries in the region and by promoting common messaging. From 15 to 18 March 2018, my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA and the Secretary-General of ECCAS undertook a joint mission to the Central African Republic to reiterate the support of both organizations to the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. UNOCA organized a youth forum on radicalization from 30 November to 2 December 2017 in Libreville, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Organization of la Francophonie and ECCAS, with a view to creating a targeted early warning system on this issue. On 24 May 2018, following a workshop co-organized by ECCAS and UNOCA in Brazzaville, participants validated the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in Central Africa. UNOCA and UNOWAS, together with ECCAS, facilitated an experience-sharing session on conflict prevention and pastoralism on 11 and 12 April 2018. The Heads of UNOCA and UNOWAS both attended the joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, which was held on 30 July 2018 in Lomé. UNOCA has also partnered with the African Union and continued to coordinate efforts to address the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including through coordination meetings and joint missions to LRA-affected countries.

48. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia has been working to encourage the positive dynamics that emerged in the Central Asian region in 2017, including by supporting Central Asian countries in their efforts to arrive at regional solutions to cross-border threats and challenges.

49. In April 2018, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the Secretariat launched the third phase of their joint project for implementing the United Nations Global Counter-

Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, the first regional approach of this kind. The aim of this phase is to pursue regional cooperation while fostering national ownership. The Regional Centre also supports regional dialogue on shared water and energy resources and environmental degradation and maintains close cooperation with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. In its approach, the Regional Centre prioritizes building national capacities for prevention, including on water diplomacy, and building partnerships with a range of United Nations entities, as well as international and regional organizations. As Central Asian countries increasingly prioritize engagement with Afghanistan as an important partner, particularly with regard to economic development and trade, the Regional Centre, working closely with UNAMA, has been supporting the strengthening of relationships between countries in the region.

50. During the reporting period, significant progress was achieved in deepening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as development. The United Nations Office to the African Union continued to work closely with the African Union to strengthen collaboration and unity of action. The Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union made progress in enhancing collaboration on peace and security issues in Africa, holding their eleventh and twelfth joint consultative meetings on 8 September 2017 in Addis Ababa and on 19 July 2018 in New York, respectively. I welcomed the recognition, expressed by both councils, of the importance of the strategic partnership between the two organizations.

51. In keeping with the enhanced and mutually reinforcing partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, and to further accelerate the implementation of the sustainable development agenda for Africa, in January 2018 I signed, with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This follows the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in April 2017. These frameworks will guide stronger cooperation, coordination and mainstreaming in the work of our organizations.

52. African Union member States also made substantial contributions to the Peace Fund, which provides financial support to African Union-led peace support operations, and took steps towards the operationalization of the mechanism with the adoption of the instrument relating to the enhanced governance and management structure of the Peace Fund. Since 2016, the Secretariat of the United Nations and the African Union Commission have strengthened their efforts towards sustainable, predictable and flexible funding mechanisms for African peace support operations authorized by the Security Council. Further to Council resolution 2320 (2016), I proposed funding options in my report contained in document S/2017/454, which were subsequently echoed in a report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on 30 May 2017 as a viable basis for progress on this issue. Work on priority areas also continues under Security Council resolution 2378 (2017), which expressed the Council's intention to further consider practical steps and conditions necessary to partly finance African Union-led peace support operations through assessed contributions, on a case-by-case basis.

53. I am strongly committed to strengthening the Organization's partnerships with regional and other organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. To this end, I convened a high-level interactive dialogue with regional and other organizations in New York on 12 and 13 June 2018. High-level representatives from 19 regional and other organizations active in the area of international peace and security participated. Participants had a frank and productive exchange of views on

global challenges related to peace and security from the prevention perspective. We identified concrete actions to reinforce our cooperation and coordination, particularly in the field.

Ensuring an inclusive approach to peace

54. The United Nations takes a broad and inclusive approach to peacebuilding, peacemaking and sustaining peace. During the reporting period, special political missions continued to mainstream this approach in all their efforts, particularly in terms of prioritizing engagement and inclusion of actors who might otherwise be marginalized or excluded from decision-making, peacemaking, peacebuilding or conflict-resolution efforts.

55. UNSOM conducted a working session in December 2017 for 18 women members of the Federal Parliament as part of its joint efforts with UN-Women and the United Nations country team to strengthen the capacities of women parliamentarians. The working sessions included the elected executives of the Somali women's caucus and provided an opportunity for open discussions among members of parliament on various issues, including their role as legislators and advocates of women's political empowerment. Participants identified a set of priority areas, including reconciliation, one-person-one-vote universal elections in 2020, constitutional review and further capacity-building.

56. The gender working group composed of representatives of the Government of Colombia, FARC-EP and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has continued to mainstream gender considerations in the verification of aspects of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. The working group consists of gender focal points designated by the three members, which also nominated gender focal points at the regional and local levels. This tripartite gender group has been referred to by the parties as a best practice that allowed them to reinforce their work and dialogue around gender-related issues and the role of women in the peace process, including the specific needs of women ex-combatants.

57. In 2017, more than 50 representatives of women-led civil society groups and umbrella organizations came together under the auspices of UNIOGBIS to form an inclusive women's forum for peace in Guinea-Bissau. The forum aims to help end the political impasse and encourage a resumption of dialogue between the President and the majority and opposition parties. It appointed 10 influential women to assist in opening space for dialogue among political actors and parties; it presented a report of their work to the President of the Republic, the signatories of the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and international stakeholders in August 2017. This facilitation process helped to reduce tensions in the country and forestall a possible return to violence. The forum also facilitated the establishment of a communication channel between State institutions and the parties to the conflict, which proved instrumental in the appointment of a new Prime Minister in April 2018.

58. The Syrian Women's Advisory Board to my Special Envoy for Syria has continued to work to ensure that gender perspectives are considered throughout the political process. Since 2017, the Office of my Special Envoy has been systematically tracking the number of women in the delegations participating in the intra-Syrian talks and their substantive roles, the gender dynamics in the talks and how implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is advanced. The Special Envoy has also expressed his intention to reserve for women 30 per cent of the seats on a constitutional committee to be formed under United Nations auspices in Geneva in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

59. The United Nations also recognizes the important and positive role that young people play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, as acknowledged by the Security Council in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth and peace and security. Special political missions continue to engage actively with youth and young people in different aspects of their work, including in mediation, peace and reconciliation processes, and political participation more broadly. For instance, UNSOM has worked with various local, regional and international actors to ensure the participation of young people in national peace processes. Overall, I have reiterated that young people are a missing piece in the United Nations broader efforts to make and sustain peace. I will continue to emphasize the need to ensure their full and active engagement in the work of the United Nations.

Safety and security

60. Many special political missions, in bearing mandates centred around complex peace processes, operate in highly volatile and challenging security environments. In some cases, these environments are characterized by ongoing and high-intensity military conflicts, insurgency, social unrest or terrorist activity.

61. United Nations personnel who are based, operate or deployed in mission environments such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen face a considerable risk of becoming collateral victims, or being directly targeted. These circumstances directly challenge the Organization's ability to stay and deliver on its mandates and must therefore be factored into the overall posture of special political missions, requiring continuous attention and proactive measures. While the United Nations relies primarily on host Governments to guarantee the security of mission personnel, in some contexts they have insufficient capacity to deliver security services. The Department of Political Affairs and the leadership of special political missions engage continuously with the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat to review risk management strategies so as to adapt and minimize any possible impact on mandate delivery for all missions, including panels or groups of experts supporting Security Council committees.

62. Special political missions, in many instances, have thus had to maintain significant security mitigation measures, identified and enhanced through a continuous risk management process. Examples of such measures include the deployment of United Nations armed civilian security personnel, increased cooperation with regional partners that deploy military personnel on the ground, the deployment of guard units provided by Member States, and the employment of private security companies, where appropriate and in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

Geographical distribution and gender representation

63. I remain committed to improving the representation of women throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions. As at June 2018, 31.8 per cent of internationally recruited staff serving in the missions were women, a slight decrease of 1 per cent over the previous year. Among locally recruited staff in those missions, about 16 per cent were women, a slight improvement of 1 per cent over the previous year. These numbers indicate that more work needs to be done. My system-wide strategy on gender parity, which I launched in September 2017, will be a critical part of United Nations efforts to improve the number of women serving at all levels, with the goal of reaching full gender parity in the Organization by 2028.

64. I am similarly convinced that we must continue to promote and improve geographical diversity in the United Nations. As at June 2018, the distribution of the

1,398 internationally recruited staff serving in the field-based special political missions was as follows: 22.8 per cent from the African Group, 22.7 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 12.7 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 7.6 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 34.3 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States. Of the 2,093 locally recruited staff, 13.4 per cent were from the African Group, 79.6 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 0.1 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 5.3 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 1.7 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States.

V. Observations

65. In the present report, I have emphasized the importance that I continue to attach to special political missions, particularly in the Organization's ongoing effort to place prevention at the centre of its work. I am confident that Member States will continue to value the critical contribution of special political missions to conflict prevention, resolution and sustaining peace.

66. Special political missions must remain flexible, nimble and able to respond and adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. Inclusive, broad-based and integrated approaches to addressing security, development and humanitarian challenges will increasingly be needed. I will continue to advocate for these across our work, but particularly in regions such as the Sahel and the Great Lakes.

67. I am confident that the ongoing reform efforts within the United Nations, which are due to come into effect on 1 January 2019, will help to strengthen the ability of special political missions to deliver on their mandates, while also sharpening their focus on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As I noted in my original proposal on the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar (A/72/525), the reform seeks to prioritize conflict prevention and sustaining peace and to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In particular, the new single, regional political-operational structure that will be shared between the future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations will be instrumental in better supporting the work of special political missions, including by ensuring coordination, synergy and coherence with United Nations peacekeeping missions that are working in the same region or have intersecting and/or complementary mandates. With regard to the unresolved question of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions, on which the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions made recommendations in 2011 that were later reiterated in the reports of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, it is my hope that Member States will provide guidance.

68. The outcomes of management reform, including strengthened client orientation, simplification of human resources policies and practices as well as decentralization and delegation of authority and decision-making closer to the point of delivery, will be a further important factor in ensuring the enhanced accountability and effectiveness of special political missions. The repositioning of the United Nations development system, particularly the creation of a newly empowered and more impartial resident coordinator system, will also help to strengthen the United Nations presence on the ground, which will enable greater coordination with the work of the special political missions.

69. As noted throughout the present report, partnerships with other international and regional stakeholders, particularly regional and subregional organizations, are critical

to the effectiveness of the special political missions. In this regard, I look forward to further efforts to implement the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and to working closely with the African Union, as with other regional and subregional organizations and Member States, to help advance conflict prevention and sustaining peace in Africa, and elsewhere.

Annex

United Nations special political missions (as at 1 August 2018)

Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
3. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
4. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
5. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
6. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
7. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan
8. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
9. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
10. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi
11. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

Sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels and other entities and mechanisms

12. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea
13. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
14. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
15. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
16. Panel of Experts on Libya
17. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
18. Panel of Experts on Yemen
19. Panel of Experts on South Sudan
20. Panel of Experts on Mali
21. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
22. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)
23. Support for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)
24. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
25. Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017)

Regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions

26. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
27. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
28. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
29. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
30. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
31. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
32. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
33. United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
34. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
35. United Nations Office to the African Union
36. United Nations support team to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
37. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
38. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia